

Would the Chair announce the business for the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to speak for up to 15 minutes, and I may extend my time as the debate goes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FEMA FUNDING

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to follow up on the remarks of Leader REID by reminding everyone how unfortunate but in some ways necessary this situation is.

This whole debate, in my view, is worth having. It is unfortunate it is so close to the end of the year because the Senate actually offered a bill, as the Presiding Officer may remember, earlier in September to try to avoid getting to this last minute. But this whole controversy started just a few days after Hurricane Irene had raked the east coast and wreaked havoc from North Carolina, through Connecticut, into Vermont and New Hampshire, and people are still reeling. The way this controversy started was Representative CANTOR said: Before we can provide help, we need to find an offset in the budget. In other words, before we can help the victims of Irene—the thousands of homes that were flooded, the electrical wires on the ground, the businesses flooded out—we have to go to Washington and find a program to cut. I strongly objected then, and I have objected every day since then to that Cantor doctrine. So this is an argument and a debate worth having.

This could have been completely avoided if, the day after, Representative CANTOR, with all the outcry from his own district and newspapers around the country, many of which editorialized against that position, would have just said: I am sorry, I made a mistake. And I have had to say that in my political career: I am sorry, I made a mistake. But instead of saying that, he doubled down, and he doubled down on the backs of people from Pennsylvania, to New York, and actually to Louisiana and Mississippi because it is our projects that have been stopped for the last 6 weeks. FEMA, as far as Louisiana is concerned, was out of money 6 weeks ago.

This is what the Cantor doctrine looks like to a very clever cartoonist. I am going to put this up in my office and keep it forever. It says:

Welcome to the Republican disaster relief hotline. At the tone, please tell us the emergency and how you plan to offset the cost of your rescue.

Here is Grandmother sitting on the roof, with her little cat on the chimney, with her television and her cane, calling FEMA.

I am the appropriations chair of this committee, as my colleagues know. It is a good thing I am chairing this appropriations committee because I happen to know a lot about disaster relief, having to lead the effort for the gulf coast in the wake of Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike. This is not a little matter, as some of the press reported over the weekend. I have read most of the editorials from coast to coast. Some have written: Why is Congress arguing? This is such a minor matter. I don't think the \$40 billion it took to rebuild the gulf coast is a minor matter, and I don't think any taxpayer in America would think \$40 billion is a minor matter.

This Cantor doctrine must be rejected. I am not the only one who believes this. There are wonderful articles and editorials in papers all across the country. I am going to read some of them today. I am so glad people were working through the weekend and focusing on this debate.

From Colorado, the Denver Post writes:

... and some Members of Congress are so bent on budget cutting—

They are referring to the Republicans, of course—

that they happily seize the opportunity to demand concessions, despite the larger impact on our struggling economy. In this case, it is demanding that money for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency disaster assistance to communities hit by flood, fire, and other manner of natural disasters, be offset by comparable cuts to the Federal budget. Demanding such offsets is unprecedented in terms of emergency relief, and it has again manufactured the prospects of a shutdown. To be clear, we are not supporting a blank check—

And neither am I. I have been an appropriator since I was 23 years old. I am 56. I understand balanced budgets and debt limits and curbing government spending. I have been a part of those efforts. The last time we had a balanced budget, a Democrat was in the White House—Bill Clinton—as the Presiding Officer knows. We understand there is no such thing as a free lunch or a blank check, and we are going to pay for these disasters, but we don't have to pay for them while Grandmother is on the roof. We can figure out how to pay for it later and send help to her now.

The article goes on to say:

... but we think any near-term spending cuts are best dealt with by the super committee as opposed to a symbolic standoff that sends ripple effects beyond Washington.

This is the Brattleboro Vermont Reformer:

Though individuals eligible for Federal disaster aid and State and city governments recouping emergency response costs are still receiving funds, projects dating back as far as Hurricane Katrina are once again waiting for money. How did House majority leader Eric Cantor of Virginia respond? He said: "Change like this is hard."

The paper goes on to say:

However, not as hard as waiting for power lines to get restrung along the Auger Hole Road, wondering when, if ever, you will be able to move back into your waterlogged home or when your road might become passable again. Though Congress has about a week to get everything ironed out, we can expect this argument to go down to the last minute.

I wish we weren't here at the last minute. I wish to remind everyone that the Senate passed—with a bipartisan response to this, which provided the money FEMA needed without the offset—it was passed bipartisanship with 10 Republicans and all the Democrats and sent to the House. They could have passed that bill, and we would all be gone now, with FEMA replenished, set up for the next year, and the jobs program, which is really a private sector effort to create jobs in America, would be untouched and would be moving forward.

This argument started when Representative CANTOR came up with a new tea party agenda, which is for flood victims to let FEMA know what offset can be required before they are rescued.

Other newspapers throughout the country, including Pennsylvania, say:

Much of northeast Pennsylvania needs Federal assistance to recover from flooding, but two of the region's representatives—

In this case, both Republican Representatives—

offered an unacceptable condition.

They go on to say—they list the Members.

They say:

The problem isn't the Senate, which earlier had passed a bill by a positive vote that included 10 Republicans to appropriate more than \$7 billion for FEMA that handles disaster relief. That fund could run dry. The House responded with a bill that would provide \$3.7 billion, but only if two loan programs for energy development projects were rescinded.

Senator HARRY REID, they say, "goes on to offer a compromise with the House." But I guess we are in the time of no compromise and take whatever hostages you can. In this case, the tea party Republicans want to take hostage the Grandma who is on her roof asking for help.

Even the New York newspapers:

Congress shouldn't allow disaster aid for people devastated by Tropical Storm Irene to be stalled by a fight over how much is enough and how to cover the tab.

We are willing to negotiate with the House over how much. We believe our number of \$6.1 billion is not enough for the year, and I think the records will show as we move forward that I am accurate. But given the situation we are in, we don't need to fight over that